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Viewing cable 07LIMA3163, IEDS IN ERADICATION OPERATIONS

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- The top box shows each cables unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
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Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
07LIMA3163	2007-09-18 23:45	2011-08-30 01:44	CONFIDENTIAL	Embassy Lima

Appears in these articles:

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C O N F I D E N T I A L LIMA 003163

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/18/2011
TAGS: [SNAR](#) [KCRM](#) [PTER](#) [PREL](#) [PE](#)
SUBJECT: IEDS IN ERADICATION OPERATIONS

Classified By: Susan Keogh, NAS Director. Reason: 1(d)

1.(SBU) SUMMARY: Anti-personnel mines have increased in recent months during eradication operations. CORAH and Police encountered 68 Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs-also known as booby traps) in coca fields by mid-September 2007. In a recent 2-week period, 24 booby traps were either exploded or disarmed during eradication in Tocache. Fortunately, the recent explosions in the field have not produced any deaths or permanent injuries, but they slow down eradication and could result in harm to children or other innocent bystanders in or around coca fields. Much speculation exists about the IEDs origin and manufacture -- including that unnamed persons or groups are paying between 50 and 100 dollars to lay an IED. Recently eradicators discovered a booby trap on a farm plot belonging to relatives of Congresswoman Nancy Obregon. Obregon herself subsequently declared that booby traps are a way for cocaleros to defend their coca crops. END SUMMARY.

12. (SBU) Eradication of illegal coca cultivation in the Tocache area of the Upper Hualaga Valley is now further complicated by the proliferation of anti-personnel mines or IEDs. As a precaution, an anti-mine K-9 group routinely sweeps the fields before CORAH begins to work. By mid-September 68 IEDs had either been detonated by workers or disarmed by the EDEX explosives team. Between August 25 and September 15 alone, 24 booby traps had either exploded or were disarmed during eradication operations.

13. (SBU) On September 3, Jorge Valencia, head of the reduction of supply office at DEVIDA, reported a significant increase in the number of attacks on coca eradication brigades this year. Valencia said that there were 93 attacks through the end of August, compared to 47 attacks in all of 2006 and only 23 in 2005. Valencia said that his office has registered 7 direct attacks on eradicators and 23 acts of harassment involving firearms. As a result of these attacks, one eradication worker has been killed and 19 wounded in the first 8 months of the year. Valencia also reported on the deactivation of mines planted to injure or kill members of the eradication brigades. Cocalera Congresswoman Nancy Obregon declared September 13 that laying booby traps is "an expression of the radical position many cocaleros are taking in their desperate efforts to defend the coca leaf." Her statement came after CORAH had discovered a hole with an IED box inside it the previous week while eradicating the illegal coca crop of Obregon's sister Marleni. Her field lay in close proximity to 2 maceration pits.

14. (C) The IED's recently encountered are artisan-type constructions, extremely sensitive and easy to detonate. Recently unearthed mines were encased in a double D battery flashlight to encase the explosive, normally a stick of dynamite. It is the trigger mechanism however, that makes these devices unique and lends meaning to the descriptive "improvised". A large capacity mouse trap, such as would be used for large rodents, is adapted to a block of wood with a nail driven through and protruding out of the other side of the board. The nail is positioned so that when the mouse trap is released, the trap bar will strike the nail and move it forward, barely touching the cut off primer end of a 16 gage shotgun shell. The primer has a blasting cap stuck onto the shotgun shell primer, that is inserted into the dynamite stick. Digging a hole as little as one foot and as much as twenty inches deep next to a coca plant, the booby trap is placed into a wooden box inside the hole. One end of a string, fishing line or wire is tied off to the release mechanism on the mouse trap and the other end to a root of an adjacent plant. Once the plant is pulled, the release mechanism allows the mouse trap to slam into the nail, driving it forward where it strikes, in the same way as a firing pin does on a weapon. The primer in the shotgun shell causes it to fire, in turn setting off the blasting cap and exploding the dynamite. Often, the device is coated with tar as an attempt to make it more weather resistant. On at least two recent occasions, pressure on the ground around the plant apparently caused the release mechanism to function, resulting in explosions.

15. (C) While the target is the CORAH eradicator or police,

the booby traps are indiscriminate. Anyone in proximity to the blast will be affected. Since August 25 when the new wave of IED's began appearing, the charges have been relatively small and have not included any items to increase the damage such as nail and glass, although bags of nails and broken glass have been found in the zone, along with booby traps under construction. Consequently, the protective measures taken to protect workers so far have precluded major injuries, apart from blast damage and dirt debris in the eyes. However, it is important to note that the methodology utilized up to now could adapt to more dangerous charges, including some type of improvised shrapnel.

6.(SBU) CORAH has adopted diverse security measures to minimize the damage caused by booby traps. Utilizing protective vests, eyewear and helmets, personnel now stand up hill of the coca plants whenever possible. More importantly, CORAH is now using two tools adapted to keep a distance of around 3 meters between the eradicators and the plants: the telescopic "cococho" and a long spade-like implement that allows eradicators to dig around the plants, feeling for the wooden boxes used in the IED's. These measures were put into place after the first day of operations in this zone when 2 CORAH workers set off devices causing minor eye injuries. Their overall effectiveness is clear: since being put into effect, eradicators have experienced no serious injuries.

7.(SBU) Explosive detecting dogs are being employed successfully, albeit results are less than perfect. The dogs have detected some, but not all of the devices encountered prior to exploding. The CORAH Operations Director is preparing a report covering the K-9 deployment during this phase of the operations with details on what the dogs actually discovered, what they did not, and what may be preventing more effective utilization. NAS continues to work on remedying shortcomings in the program; however, the psychological effect of having K-9s in the field is a bonus to workers and security personnel.

18. (SBU) Members of the PNP's explosive disposal unit, (EDEX by its initials in Spanish) accompany the eradicators and have successfully disposed 9 devices, primarily by way of controlled explosions. On September 9, 2 EDEX personnel were seriously wounded at the Santa Lucia base in what are still cloudy circumstances. According to the official police report, they were preparing their equipment to take to the field in their rooms when an explosive went off. A full PNP investigation is underway.

9.(C) Comment: Explosive devices have become a daily part of the eradication operations. So far this year, the devices have not produced any permanent injuries in the field, but officials directing eradication operations are concerned that these "indiscriminate killers" could result in either death or serious injury to workers, or to children or innocent bystanders in or around coca plantations. Despite the anxiety of working in minefields, having explosives go off without causing major harm is actually improving workers' morale as CORAH feels the countermeasures they take do pay off. The major challenge is to emphasize personal safety, while maintaining the pace of eradication.

10. (C) Comment Continued: The established presence of Sendero Luminoso in the area leads to speculation on who is behind the IEDs. As yet, nothing conclusive has emerged to clarify whether cocaleros are undertaking these actions on their own, have undergone training by subversive groups to learn how to fabricate and place IEDs, or whether it is strictly an outside action. At least three farmers have reported that the going price for "someone" to place an IED in coca fields is between 50-100 USD. Police Intelligence is currently investigating two names provided by different cocaleros. In addition to looking for the culprits, police are also searching for the purpose of the mines. The most recent devices do not appear to be as forceful as those found earlier in the year in Yanajanca, and do not use shrapnel. They could carry an implied threat that if CORAH does not cease operations violence will escalate. For now CORAH and

the GOP are intent on continuing operations and not
abandoning the area until all the coca there is eradicated.

NEALON